

Reservations up for holiday resort travel

The exodus of Michiganders to sunnier climates and northern ski lodges this Christmas-New Year's holiday may set a record as advance lodging and airline reservations are up 10 percent over last year, according to Automobile Club of Michigan.

Air space to Florida, California, Mexico, Hawaii and the Caribbean is booked for much of the holiday period. Lodging in those areas and at many state ski lodges is obtainable only through cancellations.

"Persons making immediate reservations at popular hotels and motels across Michigan should find desired accommodations at all but Michigan's

northern ski lodges which are filled between Christmas and New Year's Day," stated Auto Club World Travel manager C.E. Stanbury.

Stanbury, who advised skiers without accommodations to seek reservations at motels in communities near major ski resorts, said that some northern cities are filling motel space for the holidays at a record pace.

"MOTEL SPACE is at least 90 percent booked between Christmas and New Year's in Grayling, Gaylord, Petoskey and Cadillac and those areas should fill for much of the holidays," Stanbury said.

"Motel owners in other sections of

Travel

Michigan expect heavy holiday pressure, but most operators do not anticipate filling," he added. "This includes the popular Traverse City area."

Approximately 3.4 million cars will travel an estimated 60 million miles in Michigan over the 78-hour Christmas holiday, which begins at 6 p.m. Friday, Dec. 23, and concludes at midnight Monday, Dec. 26, and again over

New Year's, which begins at 6 p.m. Friday, Dec. 30, and runs through midnight Monday, Jan. 2.

During last year's 78-hour holidays, 17 persons died in Michigan traffic accidents over Christmas and 13 over New Year's.

"between Dec. 18 and Jan. 3, Michiganders will find it difficult to obtain a ticket for air travel or book rooms at desired accommodations at warm-weather destinations," said Stanbury.

"NO MATTER where you travel this holiday, confirm all reservations for air travel or rooms at least 72 hours before starting a trip," said Stanbury.

"Persons without confirmed tickets for air travel still can arrive at airports at least two hours before intended flights depart and put names on standby lists."

Since some airlines have cancellation rates of up to 15 percent, many travelers stand a good chance of getting on intended flights. Auto Club does not recommend standby status for families.

To accommodate the expected holiday rush, some airlines have added flights. Delta has 1,000 additional seats to Florida while United will have 6,000 more seats to U.S. destinations between Dec. 16 and Jan. 3.

"Florida tourism officials say seashore accommodations south of a line from Tampa to Jacksonville and within a 20-mile radius of Disney World are nearly sold out between Dec. 15 and Jan. 3," Stanbury said. "Disney World officials are expecting record crowds between Dec. 20 and Jan. 2."

Florida campground space also will be difficult to find, with nearly 80 percent of the 94,000 public and private campsites expected to fill for the holidays.

Only scattered areas of the Caribbean still have motel-hotel accommodations during the holidays.

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